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ABSTRACT

Family literacy program development is a complex process involving numerous partners, integration of four components (adult education, early childhood education, parent education and support, and adult and child interactive activities), and a blending of resources for ongoing program support through collaboration. This workbook offers the following items: (1) a process for educators and service providers for forming successful collaborations related to family literacy; (2) questions for examining key elements of effective, four-component family literacy programs; and (3) a form for development of action plans no matter the stage of collaboration formation or program development. The 13 sections of the workbook cover the following topics: community needs; collaboration; action planning; instructional services; support services; site selection; recruitment and retention; integration of components; program management; staff selection; staff development; setting up shop; and evaluation and accountability. Three appendixes contain the essential components of family literacy, a list of common partners for family literacy program development, and family literacy goals. (KC)

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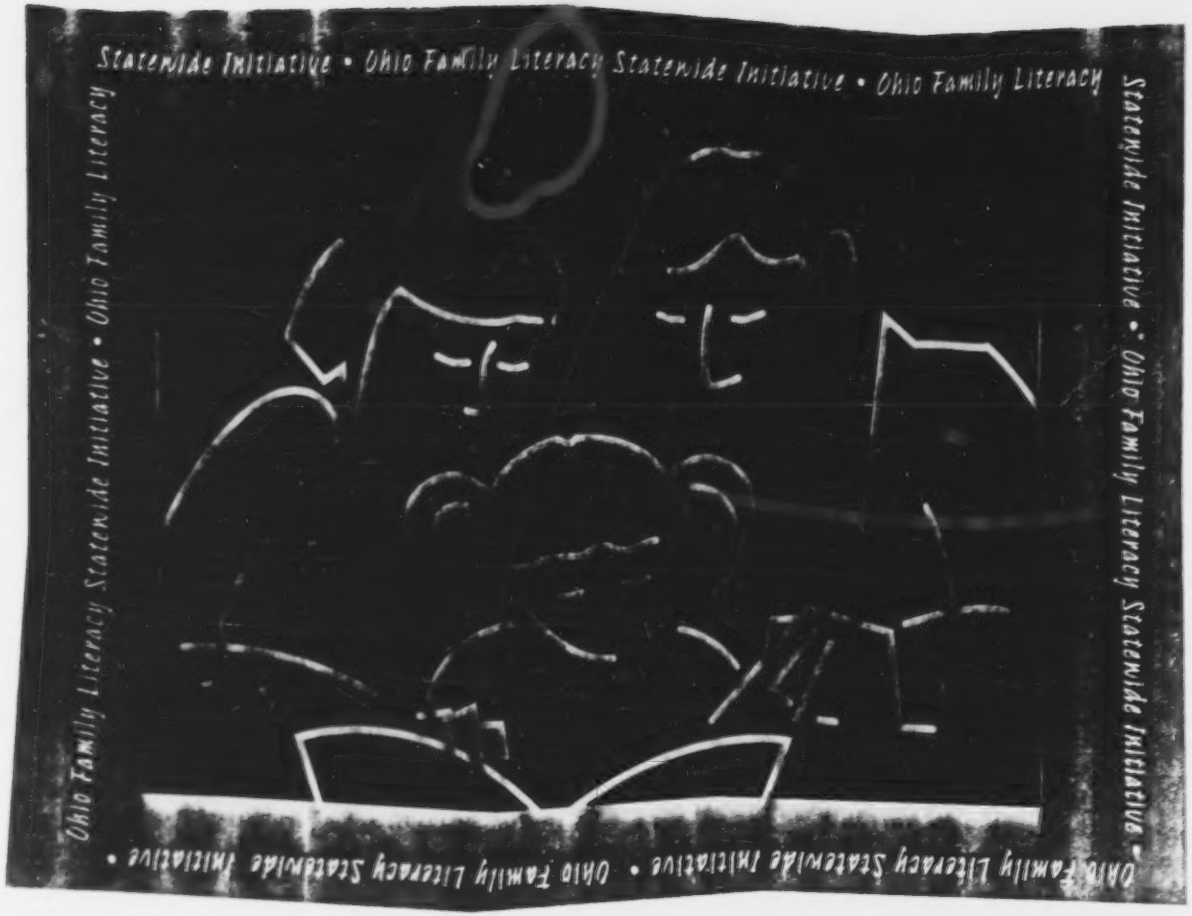
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Reflecting on Essential Elements for Comprehensive Family Literacy: A Workbook

Family literacy program development is a complex process involving numerous partners, integration of four components (adult education, early childhood education, parent education and support, and adult/child interactive activities), and a blending of resources for ongoing program support through collaboration. [See pp. 21-24 for information about each component.]

This workbook offers 1) a process for educators and service providers for forming successful collaborations related to family literacy, 2) questions for examining key elements of effective, four-component family literacy programs, and 3) a form for development of action plans no matter the stage of collaboration formation or program development. This workbook can, therefore, serve multiple purposes related to program planning and implementation. First, it can give potential partners information about the collaborative process. Second, it can serve as a guide for agencies who wish to start a family literacy program. Finally, the workbook can be useful to current family literacy providers who wish to engage in program expansion and/or improvement.

Great value can come from the dialogue that takes place around the workbook's key questions. The foundation for a partnership can be built as a team reaches consensus on 1) identification of community needs and resources, 2) ways to use existing resources through collaboration to meet those needs, and 3) possible strategies to implement a quality comprehensive family literacy program of sufficient intensity and duration to make significant change in the lives of families. As discussion continues, the team should be able to decide if they are ready to enter into a collaborative relationship for family literacy program development.

Collaboration implies that agencies will jointly develop and agree to a set of common goals, share responsibility for attaining those goals, and work together to achieve those goals using the expertise of each collaborator (Bruner 1991, p. 6).

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Process for Forming Collaborations

In the document, *Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Profamily System of Education and Human Services*, a five-stage process is suggested for establishing collaborations (Melaville, Blank, and Asayesh 1993). The National Center for Family Literacy has summarized and adapted those stages for family literacy as follows:

Stage one: **Getting together.** In this stage, a small group comes together to explore how to improve services for families through family literacy. They identify other community representatives with a stake in the same issue, make a joint commitment to collaborate, and agree on a unifying theme. They also establish shared leadership, set ground rules for working together, secure initial support, and determine how to finance collaborative planning.

Stage two: **Building trust and ownership.** Next, partners establish common ground. They share information about each other and the needs of families and children in their community. Using this information, they create a shared vision of what family literacy would look like, and they develop a mission statement and a set of goals to guide their future action.

Stage three: **Developing a strategic plan.** Here, partners begin to explore options that flow from their common concerns and shared vision. They agree to focus on a specific geographic area, and they design a family literacy program that incorporates the elements of their shared vision. Partners also develop the technical tools and interagency agreements needed to put their plan into action. During this stage, the group may go back to preceding stages to bring in new partners and continue to build ownership.

Process for Forming Collaborations

Stage four: **Taking action.** Partners begin to implement the family literacy program. They use what they learn from their experiences to adjust policies and practices of the collaborating organizations. Partners design an ongoing evaluation strategy that helps them to identify specific change requirements, make mid-course corrections, and measure the results.

Stage five: **Going to scale.** Partners take steps to ensure the strategies and capacities developed are adapted, expanded, and recreated as needed throughout the community. To do this, partners continue to develop local leadership, strengthen staff capacity through preservice and inservice training, and build a strong constituency for change.

(*The Family Literacy Answer Book 1997, p. 17*)

Process for Forming Collaborations

The Ohio Family Literacy Statewide Initiative offers technical support for all stages of collaboration formation, but this workbook was developed to especially assist in stages one, two, and most of three. If you are using this workbook with a group that is meeting for the first or second time to discuss potential partnerships for family literacy, then you are probably in Stage One. You will want to establish good communication in this stage.

Questions to consider in Stage One: Getting Together

Who are we and what do we each do?

What is the mission of our respective agencies?

Why did we each agree to meet?

How might closer relationships with other agencies for family literacy perhaps improve outcomes for our own clients?

What is the history of interagency collaboration and cooperation in our community? What can be learned from this history?

What barriers to collaboration exist in our community? How might we overcome those barriers?

Examining Key Elements for Program Planning

Once the initial team members learn about each other's agencies and discuss the benefits of family literacy, work can begin on collaboration elements directly related to family literacy program development. The **first two key elements** for the team's consideration are 1) Assessing Community Needs, and 2) Establishing the Necessary Collaborative Relationships.

Key Element 1: Assessing Community Needs

Assessing the needs for family literacy services in a community is an essential first step for program planning and development. The assessment should encompass at least five areas:

- Analysis of the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), community demographics, and school district/building data
- Survey of literacy providers
- Survey of potential participating families
- Survey of other kinds of service providers, such as health, social services, childcare, etc.
- Survey of employers

Key Element 1:
Assessing Community Needs

Questions to Consider in Assessing Community Needs

Have partner agencies conducted a community needs assessment either independently or together? What other data might be useful?

Analyzing the data gathered, what are the educational and non-educational needs of families in the community?

What are the needs of employers?

What programs are currently addressing these needs?

Are there gaps in service delivery or duplication of services to families?

Why is there a need in the community for a comprehensive family literacy program of sufficient intensity and duration to make significant change in the lives of families?

How would a family literacy program fit into the community's network of family services? Who will be served? (Hint: Have you determined who is the target population for the program?)

What resources will be necessary to support a comprehensive program in the community? What existing resources can support the program?

Key Element 2: Establishing the Necessary Collaborative Relationships

To develop quality comprehensive family literacy services, providers must form strong partnerships and use the expertise of each collaborator. Key partners take responsibility for providing the services and develop new relationships and systems to improve services for families. Each partner commits resources (people, funding, in-kind services) in pursuit of a shared goal.

Questions to consider in Establishing the Necessary Collaborative Relationships

What agencies could assist in the delivery of services for the four-component program? [See Appendices A. and B.]

What other groups might have a stake in solving problems that affect the target population? (Hint: Have "clients" been included?)

Who should be contacted in each agency or group to move program development forward? How should invitations be issued?

What steps need to be taken to assure the necessary key agencies/groups are in collaboration rather than merely cooperation?

What might be the shared goal among these agencies and groups?

How would the achievements of the collaboration contribute to the mission and goals of the individual agencies in the partnership?

What formal or informal agreements will be needed among partners?

What can be done now to lay the groundwork for continued funding? Expansion?

The team is now at a point where initial action plans for family literacy program development can be drawn up. Use the following form to compile ideas gathered through discussion of the previous *Questions to Consider* into an INITIAL ACTION PLAN.

NOTE: Once the plan is developed and agreed upon by team members, it **needs to be shared** with respective agencies currently involved in the team. Team members should be prepared to point out how the plan for family literacy program development will help their own agency to achieve its mission more effectively.

The initial ACTION PLAN **should include** steps to involve the other agencies and groups who have a stake in the issue of comprehensive family literacy programming but are not present at this time. (How will support for the program and plan be developed among agencies not presently represented on the team? Who will take the responsibility for organizing and facilitating the next session to further develop the plan with an "expanded" team?)

ACTION PLAN FORM

Program Name

Initial Planning Team Members:

INITIAL ACTION PLAN

I. List the priority needs of your area/community.

II. Sources for needs assessment information

III. Define the target audience for the comprehensive family literacy program

IV. Collaboration's shared goal

V. Objectives

1.0

2.0

3.0

4.0

5.0

VI. Activities

Objective 1.0

Activity:	Person(s) Responsible	Proposed Completion Date
1.1		
1.2		
1.3		
1.4		
1.5		
1.6		

Objective 2.0

Activity:	Person(s) Responsible	Proposed Completion Date
2.1		
2.2		
2.3		
2.4		
2.5		
2.6		

Objective 3.0

Activity:	Person(s) Responsible	Proposed Completion Date
3.1		
3.2		
3.3		
3.4		
3.5		
3.6		

Objective 4.0

	Activity:	Person(s) Responsible	Proposed Completion Date
4.1			
4.2			
4.3			
4.4			
4.5			
4.6			

Objective 5.0

Activity:	Person(s) Responsible	Proposed Completion Date
5.1		
5.2		
5.3		
5.4		
5.5		
5.6		

Team Signatures: **Date:**

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

REMEMBER: Once the plan is developed and agreed upon by team members, it needs to be shared with respective agencies currently involved in the team.

The initial ACTION PLAN should include steps to involve the other agencies and groups who have a stake in the issue of comprehensive family literacy programming. How will support for the program and plan be developed among agencies not presently represented on the team?

Person(s) responsible for organizing and facilitating the next session to further develop the plan with an "expanded" team:

Further Examination of Key Elements for Program Development: for Advanced Teams

The following pages of this workbook should be used by teams who have **established the initial collaborative partnerships necessary for development** of a four-component family literacy program. Full program implementation calls for real action. All four components and support services do not need to be put into place at once, however. With a further developed Action Plan, the partners can build the program a step at a time. What can be done when is dependent upon the community's current resources and the accessibility of potential resources. Just as it takes time, patience, and open communication to build a collaborative partnership with a shared goal, so it takes these same elements to build a quality comprehensive family literacy program. The partners should focus efforts on the common mission developed by the collaboration. Partners should always have the families to be served as the center of program. The following *Questions to Consider* should help the team to continue the development of the action plan started in this workbook.

Key Element 3: Instructional Services

Adult Education

Adults are motivated to learn when instruction relates to their individual goals. To accommodate different learners, programs usually offer opportunities to acquire basic literacy and life skills, study for the GED or other high school credential, learn skills for employability and job seeking, and upgrade skills for job training or post-secondary education. Many programs also offer English-as-a-second language instruction (ESL). [*The Family Literacy Answer Book* 1997, p. 55]

Questions to consider in Instructional Services for the Adult Education Component

What kinds of adult educational services are needed for the program's target population?

What key community agencies or programs deliver these services?

Are key people from these agencies or programs fully engaged in the partnership at this time?

What steps need to be taken to provide quality adult educational services with intensity and duration in the program?

Instructional Services

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood services in family literacy programs aim to increase the developmental skills of young children (usually 0-8 years old) to prepare them for academic success as preschoolers and to support that success when they are in school. While most early childhood programs encourage literacy-related activities, the family literacy program places literacy-related activities at the center of the early childhood piece. Teachers provide a multitude of opportunities for children to engage in literate behaviors. Also, the family literacy early childhood classroom includes activities shared between parent/primary caregiver and the child. Teachers model age-appropriate literacy strategies for the adults who are regular participants in the classroom. Parents and children learn together; this is the fundamental concept of a comprehensive family literacy program. [Summarized from *The Family Literacy Answer Book* 1997, p. 129]

Questions to consider in Instructional Services for the Early Childhood Education Component

What key community agencies or programs deliver these services for the program's targeted age group of children?

Are key people from these agencies or programs fully engaged in the partnership at this time? Who is missing?

What steps need to be taken to provide quality early childhood education for the targeted age group of children?

What steps need to be taken to include parents as full partners in this piece of the program?

Instructional Services

Parent Education and Support

Parents/primary caregivers meet regularly [with a trained facilitator] to learn, discuss, and share experiences about personal development topics, career preparation, parenting, and other family issues. The group meetings offer an opportunity for adults to build their strengths in order to increase their knowledge and improve abilities in non-academic areas. Parents/caregivers learn new information, ideas, or skills in areas such as health care, child development, nutrition, budgeting, human relations, legal rights, and other important topics. Parents receive encouragement and support as well as referrals to other resources when necessary. Parents also develop a support group composed of other family literacy program participants and staff. [*The Family Literacy Answer Book* 1997, p. 223]

Questions to consider in Instructional Services for Parent Education and Support Component

What key community agencies or programs could provide the trained parent educator(s) to facilitate the parent group meetings?

Are key people from these agencies or programs fully engaged in the partnership at this time?

What steps need to be taken to provide the parent group component?

Instructional Services

Parent/Child Together Time

In comprehensive family literacy programs, parents/primary caregivers spend time with their children in the classroom on a regular basis. (This time may be evenings or weekends to meet the needs of parents' work schedules.) Teachers provide role modeling and structured situations for positive parent and child interactions. Some of the classroom activities can be continued at home and discussed later in the Parent Group meetings. This component empowers parents in their roles as the primary teachers of their children. It also strengthens the learning relationship between parent and child and helps parents feel more comfortable in school settings. [Summarized from *The Family Literacy Answer Book* 1997, p. 4]

Questions to consider in Instructional Services for the Parent/Child Together Component

What key community agencies or programs could provide staff and/or materials to assist the early childhood staff or elementary school teacher in the development of the parent/child interactive activities?

Are key people from these agencies or programs fully engaged in the partnership at this time? Who is missing?

What steps need to be taken to provide these parent/child activities on a regular basis (opportunities offered at least twice/week)?

Key Element 4: Support Services

All families have complex lives. When adults have limited literacy, their families are particularly at-risk. That is, the target populations for family literacy programs often have multiple barriers that could prevent their full participation in the educational services of the program. Through partnerships, teamwork, and open, ongoing communication, programs can provide the support system each family needs to overcome its barriers. The support services intertwine with the instructional services to form the foundation of this family-centered approach to intergenerational education.

Consider: Transportation, Child Care, Meals, Social Services, Health Services, and any other barriers the community needs survey revealed.

Questions to consider for Support Services

Using information from the Community Needs Survey, determine what support services should be part of the family literacy program?

What key community agencies or programs could provide these support services?

Are key people from these agencies or programs fully engaged in the partnership at this time? Who is missing?

What steps need to be taken to provide the necessary support services for program success?

Key Element 5:
Site Selection

Questions to consider in Site Selection

What criteria will be used to select a site(s) for the program? (Hint: Are you sensitive to families' transportation and schedule needs as well as the fears oftentimes experienced by adults with limited literacy?)

How will the partnership assure that key people at the facility(ies) buy into this partnership and program?

Keeping the four components in mind (adult ed, child ed, parent ed, and adult/child interaction), what needs to be accomplished to prepare the physical environment of the site(s). (Hint: Are accommodations needed for infants and toddlers? Are there appropriate facilities to accommodate adults and children during regularly scheduled activities together?)

What needs to be accomplished to assure the acceptance and support of other staff members at the site facility(ies)?

Key Element 6: Recruitment and Retention

The importance of recruitment and retention strategies is plain and simple: if no one comes or no one stays, how will the program accomplish its goals? There is no one right way to recruit and retain families. Collaborative efforts, creativity, incentives, and sensitivity to the target audience are fundamental principles for successful recruitment and retention strategies.

Questions to consider for Recruitment and Retention

What barriers might prevent families from participating in the program?

What barriers might prevent families from staying in the program for sufficient time to make change?

What barriers might prevent families from participating on a regular basis?

How can the program address these barriers? (Hint: Have you taken parents work schedules into consideration? Are you sensitive to the fear and/or lack of self-confidence experienced by adults with limited literacy?)

What recruitment strategies does the partnership plan to use? (Hint: Do you typically rely on print materials for program promotion? Have you considered the impact of cultural and/or language differences ? What other community partners can play a role in recruitment? What community partners can provide incentives? Have you planned to have home visits as a part of the program?)

What will be the ongoing plan for recruitment?

How will schools be involved in recruitment?

What steps need to be taken to have parents involved in program planning and implementation so they have ownership of the program?

What steps need to be taken to assure the site facility is a warm and friendly place?

How can the partners increase awareness of family literacy issues and program goals in the community?

Key Element 7: Integration of Components

Integration of the components in comprehensive family literacy refers to the planned, interactive design of the educational and support services for families. Regular team meetings are the mechanism for planning the program activities. Discussions concerning the interests and needs of families during these team meetings produce interdisciplinary curriculum responses that support each family's development. These discussions may lead staff members to seek collaborative support from other community agencies. Each of the core components connects with the others in providing services in response to the interests, abilities, and needs of each family and in pursuit of a central goal: the development and transfer of literacy in each family. Effective programs connect and intertwine at all levels. [Adapted from *The Family Literacy Answer Book* 1997, p. 289]

Questions to consider in Integration of Components

How will time be built into the program for staff from all core components to meet for planning?

What various approaches can be used to establish and maintain linkages across components?

How might partners' cross-training activities (agency level) assist with component integration (program level)?

Key Element 8: Program Management

Planning across components, sharing responsibilities for recruitment and parent/child activities, supporting each family as it needs, providing ongoing professional development for staff and collaborative partners, maintaining community collaborations to support the entire program, maintaining sound fiscal records—these kinds of activities require quality program management. Although the family literacy program is a result of collaborative efforts of many agencies and programs, one agency needs to take the lead to manage the program. The entire collaborative partnership should feel comfortable with the lead agency's capacity to manage the program, and all partners should have shared responsibilities to accomplish the partnership's shared goal.

Questions to consider in Program Management

Who are key administrators (school, agency, business, program, etc.) that must buy into the program to ensure its success?

Who will commit to be the lead agency to oversee program management?

Has the program coordinator been determined or will the position be a new hire? (This position is necessary for comprehensive family literacy and should be filled as soon as possible.)

How will collaborative partners share information? How will confidentiality issues be handled? Will standardized forms of any type be feasible?

Key Element 9: Staff Selection

Family literacy programs are grounded in important beliefs about families and learning. A few of these beliefs are:

- The family unit is the appropriate focus if we plan to influence the attitudes, values, and expectations communicated in the home.
- Families are culturally and individually diverse; this diversity is healthy and natural and enriches the community.
- Literacy has a strong intergenerational effect; it exists on a continuum.
- All families have strengths.
- Change takes time; it is a gradual process. It is more meaningful and lasting if the community, or "family," as a whole participates in change.

(from *The Family Literacy Answer Book*, 1997, p. 7)

Program staffing is another critical contributor to the program's success. Staff selection becomes an important process that involves raising awareness about the program's mission, strengths and needs of families, the appropriate role of teachers, program beliefs and assumptions, etc.

Key Element 9: Staff Selection

Questions to consider for Staff Selection

What are the steps necessary in hiring staff for this program? (Note: Remember to consider the hours, days, etc., you intend to offer services.)

How will you determine whether potential staff members are team players who understand the program's mission, beliefs, assumptions, etc.?

How will the process differ from other hiring procedures? (Multiple funding support? Equity of schedules and pay?)

Key Element 10: Staff Development

Ongoing staff development is a necessity for any quality program's success. Knowledgeable staff provide the best services for families.

Questions to consider for Staff Development

How will staff be prepared for their roles in the program?

How will ongoing staff development needs be identified and responded to?

How will cross-trainings be planned and conducted?

Key Element 11: Setting Up Shop

Questions to consider for Setting Up Shop

What existing equipment and materials can be used at the site(s)?

What needs to be obtained?

How will the needed items be obtained (solicit donations, purchase, borrow, rent)?

If purchases are necessary, what agency will be responsible for what?

What is the timeframe for the program's start? (Hint: Use all elements used for reflection in developing your timeline.)

Key Element 12:
Evaluation and Accountability

Questions to consider for Evaluation and Accountability

What are the specific outcomes the partnership expects for the family members enrolled in the program?

How will these outcomes be measured?

Who will be responsible for data collection and reporting to funders (see also Program Management)?

How will results be used with students, collaborative partners, etc.?

References and Acknowledgements

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The Ohio Family Literacy Statewide Initiative would like to acknowledge the significant contribution of the National Center for Family Literacy to this document. Substantial portions of this document were either taken directly from its publications as referenced above or summarized. Summaries are noted as such in the text. In addition, the Initiative wishes to recognize Susan Imel's work, ***For the Common Good: A Guide for Developing Local Interagency LinkageTeams, Revised Edition***, which has served as a model for this workbook related to family literacy program development.

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Appendix A: Essential Components of Family Literacy

The Essential Components of Family Literacy

- Adult literacy, basic skills, life skills, and job skills/readiness instruction
- Early childhood education with a focus on literacy-related activities
- Parent Education and Support Group
- Regular opportunities for parent and child interaction

Note: The term "Parent" includes any adult who serves as the child's Primary Caregiver.

Appendix B: Common Partners for Family Literacy Program Development

- Public school system (Title I, REA, etc.)
- Adult education programs (ABLE, Volunteers of America, Joint Vocational, etc.) and teen programs (GRADS, LEAP)
- Head Start
- Public School Preschool
- Child Care
- School-Age Child Care
- Health Department (WIC, Early Intervention, Early Start)
- County Department of Human Services (Prevention, Retention, and Contingency funds)
- Special Education Service Center
- Community Library
- Housing Authority/Community Development Agency
- Community Action Councils
- Family and Children First Councils
- Colleges (two and four year) and universities
- Hospitals, Businesses, Unions, etc.

Appendix C:
Family Literacy Goals

- Improve basic literacy skills (Parent and Child)
- Enhance children's development and, therefore, school readiness and success
- Increase parents' involvement in their children's education (all ages)
- Enhance parenting skills and life skills
- Enhance parent/child relationships
- Improve parents' job skills/readiness

Notes: